Industry Cooperation Encouraged for Reliability Database That Could Help Reduce PV Systems Costs

In a concerted effort to reduce the cost -- while increasing the reliability -- of fielded photovoltaic systems, staff at Sandia's System Applications Department are studying ways in which the life-cycle cost of a PV system can be defined and determined.

A new thrust in this effort is the establishment of centralized database detailing performance, reliability, and cost information on PV industry systems. A proposed (unpopulated) template for this study may be accessed at http://www.sandia.gov/pv/reliability.htm. To ensure a successful venture, the PV industry is being asked to open corporate and agency files for inclusion in the study. Cooperation from several PV companies has already resulted in their data being incorporated into the database. While individual data sets will be kept proprietary, overall non-attributable results will be made available to the industry at large.

The database has been developed in a Microsoft Access format and includes a multitude of parameters identified as crucial to an understanding of overall life-cycle costs of PV systems.

Systems targeted for inclusion in the database will be those that have been fairly well maintained and that contain data on both the systems and their components. To be considered, a database should be of sufficient size and with sufficient detail to make it a useful addition to the study.

Preliminary results may be available within a matter of months, but the study is expected to be an ongoing effort that takes into account incremental discoveries. If your agency, institution, or company has collected data on your installed PV systems and you believe that data might be a useful addition to Sandia's centralized database -- or if you would like to know more about this reliability database -- please contact Larry Moore in Sandia's System Applications Department, lmmoore@sandia.gov. The reliability database should be considered a work-in-progress, and suggestions for improvements are welcomed.

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